

4.8 LAND DEVELOPMENT

The construction and maintenance of urban and commercial developments can impact water quality in many ways. Construction activities inherently disturb soil and vegetation, often resulting in accelerated erosion and sedimentation. Stormwater runoff from developed areas can also contain petroleum products, nutrients, and other contaminants.

This section contains a discussion of the potential water quality impacts expected to result from land development activities, followed by control measures to reduce or offset water quality impacts from such activities.

Construction Activities and Guidelines

Construction activities often produce erosion by disturbing the natural ground surface through scarifying, grading, and filling. Floodplain and wetland disturbances often reduce the ability of the natural environment to retain sediment and assimilate nutrients. Construction materials such as concrete, paints, petroleum products, and other chemicals can contaminate nearby water bodies. Construction impacts such as these are typically associated with subdivisions, commercial developments, and industrial developments.

Control Measures for Construction Activities

The Regional Board regulates the construction of subdivisions, commercial developments, industrial developments, and roadways based upon the level of threat to water quality. The Regional Board will request a Report of Waste Discharge and consider the issuance of an appropriate permit for any proposed project where water quality concerns are identified in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review process. Any construction activity whose land disturbance activities exceed five acres must also comply with the statewide general NPDES permit for stormwater discharges (see “Stormwater” section of this Chapter).

The following are guidelines for construction projects regulated by the Regional Board, particularly for projects located in portions of the Region where

erosion and stormwater threaten sensitive watersheds. The Regional Board recommends that each county within the Region adopt a grading/erosion control ordinance to require implementation of these same guidelines for all soil disturbing activities:

1. Surplus or waste material should not be placed in drainageways or within the 100-year floodplain of any surface water.
2. All loose piles of soil, silt, clay, sand, debris, or other earthen materials should be protected in a reasonable manner to prevent any discharge to waters of the State.
3. Dewatering should be performed in a manner so as to prevent the discharge of earthen material from the site.
4. All disturbed areas should be stabilized by appropriate soil stabilization measures by October 15th of each year.
5. All work performed during the wet season of each year should be conducted in such a manner that the project can be winterized (all soils stabilized to prevent runoff) within 48 hours if necessary. The wet season typically extends from October 15th through May 1st in the higher elevations of the Lahontan Region. The season may be truncated in the desert areas of the Region.
6. Where possible, existing drainage patterns should not be significantly modified.
7. After completion of a construction project, all surplus or waste earthen material should be removed from the site and deposited in an approved disposal location.
8. Drainage swales disturbed by construction activities should be stabilized by appropriate soil stabilization measures to prevent erosion.
9. All non-construction areas should be protected by fencing or other means to prevent unnecessary disturbance.
10. During construction, temporary protected gravel dikes, protected earthen dikes, or sand bag dikes should be used as necessary to prevent discharge of earthen materials from the site.

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during periods of precipitation or runoff.

11. Impervious areas should be constructed with infiltration trenches along the downgradient sides to dispose of all runoff greater than background levels of the undisturbed site. Infiltration trenches are not recommended in areas where infiltration poses a risk of ground water contamination.
12. Infiltration trenches or similar protection facilities should be constructed on the downgradient side of all structural drip lines.
13. Revegetated areas should be continually maintained in order to assure adequate growth and root development. Physical erosion control facilities should be placed on a routine maintenance and inspection program to provide continued erosion control integrity.
14. Waste drainage waters in excess of that which can be adequately retained on the property should be collected before such waters have a chance to degrade. Collected water shall be treated, if necessary, before discharge from the property.
15. Where construction activities involve the crossing and/or alteration of a stream channel, such activities should be timed to occur during the period in which stream flow is expected to be lowest for the year.
16. Use of materials other than potable water for dust control (i.e., reclaimed wastewater, chemicals such as magnesium chloride, etc.) is strongly encouraged but must have prior Regional Board approval before its use.

Specific Policy and Guidelines for Mammoth Lakes Area

To control erosion and drainage in the Mammoth Lakes watershed at an elevation above 7,000 feet (Figure 4.8-1), the following policy and guidelines apply:

Policy:

A Report of Waste Discharge is required not less than 90 days before the intended start of construction activities of a **new development** of either (a) six or

more dwelling units, or (b) commercial developments involving soil disturbance on one-quarter acre or more.

The Report of Waste Discharge shall contain a description of, and time schedule for implementation, for both the **interim erosion control measures** to be applied during project construction, and **short- and long-term erosion control measures** to be employed after the construction phase of the project. The descriptions shall include appropriate engineering drawings, criteria, and design calculations.

Guidelines:

1. Drainage collection, retention, and infiltration facilities shall be constructed and maintained to prevent transport of the runoff from a 20-year, 1-hour design storm from the project site. A 20-year, 1-hour design storm for the Mammoth Lakes area is equal to 1.0 inch (2.5 cm) of rainfall.
2. Surplus or waste materials shall not be placed in drainageways or within the 100-year flood plain of surface waters.
3. All loose piles of soil, silt, clay, sand, debris, or earthen materials shall be protected in a reasonable manner to prevent any discharge to waters of the State.
4. Dewatering shall be done in a manner so as to prevent the discharge of earthen materials from the site.
5. All disturbed areas shall be stabilized by appropriate soil stabilization measures by October 15 of each year.
6. All work performed between October 15th and May 1st of each year shall be conducted in such a manner that the project can be winterized within 48 hours.
7. Where possible, existing drainage patterns shall not be significantly modified.
8. After completion of a construction project, all surplus or waste earthen material shall be removed from the site and deposited at a legal

point of disposal.

9. Drainage swales disturbed by construction activities shall be stabilized by the addition of crushed rock or riprap, as necessary, or other appropriate stabilization methods.
10. All nonconstruction areas shall be protected by fencing or other means to prevent unnecessary disturbance.
11. During construction, temporary erosion control facilities (e.g., impermeable dikes, filter fences, hay bales, etc.) shall be used as necessary to prevent discharge of earthen materials from the site during periods of precipitation or runoff.
12. Revegetated areas shall be regularly and continually maintained in order to assure adequate growth and root development. Physical erosion control facilities shall be placed on a routine maintenance and inspection program to provide continued erosion control integrity.
13. Where construction activities involve the crossing and/or alteration of a stream channel, such activities shall be timed to occur during the period in which streamflow is expected to be lowest for the year.

Land Development/Urban Runoff Control Actions for Susan River Watershed

1. To protect riparian vegetation and wetlands from land disturbance activities, the Regional Board shall recommend that Lassen County and the City of Susanville require new development or any land disturbing activities to include buffer strips of undisturbed land, especially along the Susan River and its tributaries.
2. The Regional Board, with assistance from the City of Susanville and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), should conduct monitoring of the Susan River and Piute Creek within the City of Susanville to assess impacts from urban runoff. Control measures should be planned and implemented based on the results of the monitoring. The monitoring plan should be developed to identify nonpoint sources needing control. Monitoring proposals will be submitted by the Regional Board, and work will be conducted as resources allow and as the Susan River gains

priority.

3. The Regional Board shall encourage and assist other agencies in watershed restoration efforts along the Susan River.
4. The Regional Board shall encourage the City of Susanville and Lassen County to adopt a comprehensive grading ordinance. These ordinances should require, for all proposed land disturbing activities, the use of Best Management Practices to reduce erosion and stormwater runoff, including but not limited to temporary and permanent erosion control measures.
5. The Regional Board shall encourage the City of Susanville, Lassen County and Caltrans to implement Best Management Practices to reduce erosion and stormwater runoff when constructing and maintaining roads, both paved and unpaved, under their jurisdiction.

Road Construction and Maintenance

Road construction activities often involve extensive earth moving, including clearing, scarifying, excavating for bridge abutments, disturbing or modifying floodplains, cutting, and filling. Additionally, the potential for land disturbance exists from construction materials, equipment maintenance, fuel storage facilities, and general equipment use.

Once constructed, impervious road surfaces create another source of water pollution. Oils, greases, and other petroleum products, along with such toxic materials as battery acid, antifreeze, etc., may be deposited along the road surfaces. These contaminants become suspended or dissolved in any stormwater runoff that is generated on the road surfaces. Unless otherwise treated, these contaminants will flow toward local surface or ground waters. (See "Stormwater" section of this Chapter.)

Road maintenance can be potentially threatening to water quality in a number of ways. Below-grade culverts slowly fill with sediment and are cleaned out periodically, sometimes by flushing accumulated sediment into downstream drainageways. Grading of shoulders and drainageways can detach sediments and increase the risk of erosion into nearby surface

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waters. Road surfaces may be repainted or resealed with materials that harden quickly, but which can be washed off while still fresh by stormwater runoff.

In the winter, roads are often snowy, icy, or wet. To reduce winter road hazards, maintenance crews may remove the snow or ice, apply sand to provide added traction, and/or apply deicing chemicals to melt the snow and ice. Sand is rapidly dissipated or crushed by the traffic, and must be replaced frequently. Great quantities of sediment enter drainageways and/or surface waters due to this practice. Snow may be removed mechanically via snowplow or snowblower. This practice is not particularly detrimental to water quality in itself, but the snow often carries substances from the roadway when removed. Sediments, chemical deicers, and vehicle fluids may travel much farther than they would otherwise, possibly reaching area surface waters. Ice and small accumulations of snow may be removed with chemical deicers. The deicer in widest use is rock salt (sodium chloride), due to its low cost, high availability, and predictable results.

Winter road maintenance was brought to the forefront in 1989 when significant numbers of roadside trees in the Lake Tahoe Basin suddenly started dying. The public outcry caused many environmental groups and regulatory agencies, including the Regional Board, to look more closely at what had been a more or less unscrutinized, unregulated process in the past. Data began to show that Caltrans was using very high amounts of salt each winter, and the figure seemed to increase from one year to the next. The consensus of the various regulatory agencies was that Caltrans should reduce salt use, explore various alternate deicers, and monitor the impacts of salt applications on soil, water, and vegetation. Salt use decreased significantly from 1989-1992, due to more careful application procedures and to drought conditions.

At least three alternate deicers have been explored: calcium magnesium acetate, potassium acetate, and magnesium chloride with corrosion inhibitors. These products have shown some promise, but further study is required. The cost to switch to an alternate deicer will be significant. The road departments are unwilling to make the switch unless an alternate deicer is demonstrably better environmentally, will not require too much adjustment on the part of the maintenance crews and equipment, and will actually

do an effective and predictable job when applied.

However, Caltrans' monitoring of vegetation showed minimal and temporary salt accumulation within the vegetation. During the spring, any salt that had accumulated in the vegetation was flushed out from the plant material. The impacts of chemical deicers on fish and wildlife within the Lahontan Region have not been studied.

Control Measures for Road Construction and Maintenance

(Additional control measures for roads are included in the "Stormwater" section of this Chapter.)

The Regional Board regulates road construction and maintenance projects within the Lahontan Region, concentrating efforts on major construction and construction in sensitive areas. Major construction projects and those projects in sensitive areas are most often regulated under individual WDRs, and are routinely inspected. Less significant projects may be issued conditional waivers of WDRs. The Regional Board has also adopted road maintenance waste discharge requirements for some county governments in the Region. Road construction and maintenance in the Lake Tahoe Basin is also regulated under municipal NPDES Stormwater Permits (see Chapter 5).

For all road projects, the Board requires that construction be conducted in a manner which is protective to water quality, and that, at the end of a given project, the site be restabilized and revegetated. These requirements are detailed in a Management Agency Agreement with Caltrans regarding the implementation of BMPs. Additionally, all road projects are to be in compliance with the Caltrans Statewide 208 Plan (CA Dept. of Transportation 1980), which was approved by the State Board in 1979. This Plan contains a commitment to implement BMPs, but does not include great detail on the BMPs themselves. The State Board should encourage Caltrans to update its 208 plan to provide such detail, with particular attention to:

- stormwater/erosion control along existing highways
- erosion control during highway construction and

maintenance

- reduction of direct discharges (e.g., through culverts)
- reduction of runoff velocity
- infiltration, detention and retention practices
- management of deicing compounds, fertilizer, and herbicide use
- spill cleanup measures
- treatment of toxic stormwater pollutants

Since much of the implementation of BMPs on highways is done by Caltrans' contractors, the selection of qualified contractors and ongoing education of construction and maintenance personnel on BMP techniques are particularly important.

In the Lake Tahoe Basin, all governmental agencies assigned to maintain roads are required to bring all roads in the Lake Tahoe Basin into compliance with current "208" standards within a specified time schedule. That is, all existing facilities must be retrofitted to handle the stormwater runoff from the 20-year, 1-hour storm, and to restabilize all eroding slopes. The twenty-year time frame for this compliance process ends in 2008.

The Regional Board should allow salt use to continue as one component of a comprehensive winter maintenance program. However, the Regional Board should continue to require that it be applied in a careful, well-planned manner, by competent, trained crews. Should even the "proper" application of salt be shown to cause adverse water quality impacts, the Regional Board should then require that it no longer be used in environmentally sensitive areas, such as the Lake Tahoe Basin. Similarly, should an alternate deicer be shown to be effective, environmentally safe, and economically feasible, its use should be encouraged in lieu of salt.